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DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY VOLUME VIII LATIN AMERICA (U)

AUGUST 1977

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (MIS) (U)

VOLUME VIII

LATIN AMERICA

DDI-2680-108A-77

Information Cutoff Date: 1 April 1977

This publication supersedes
MIS Volume VIII, March 1977
(DDI-2680-108-77),
which should be destroyed

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PREFACE

The Military Intelligence Summary (MIS), published in eight volumes, is a synopsis of military intelligence worldwide. Intended to serve as a ready reference, the MIS presents a compilation of intelligence on those forces which contribute to the military security of each country, and on the political and economic factors affecting the country's military capability. Published semiannually, the MIS serves to update information in other DIA publications.

Unless otherwise indicated, the information in Volumes IV and VIII is that available in DIA as of 1 April and 1 October. The data cutoff date for the other volumes is 1 January and 1 July.

Information summarized in the MIS is available in detail in numerous DIA publications. A list of related publications, both completed and scheduled, is published in the Register of Intelligence Publications (DDS-2600-37) and the Defense Intelligence Production Schedule (DP-730-21-75). The Intelligence Users Guide (DDP-2600-397) explains how to obtain finished intelligence products and services from DIA.

Addressees are requested to forward information which will supplement or correct this volume. Questions and comments should be referred in writing to the Defense Intelligence Agency (ATTN: DB-3E), Washington, D.C. 20301.

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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Section J - GUATEMALA

1. Political-Military Situation:

(~~S/NOFORN~~) Guatemala, by its Constitution, is a republic with a popularly elected President and legislature. The military has exerted considerable influence over the government in recent years, however, and there have been charges that the current President, Brigadier General Kjell Laugerud Garcia (Army, retired), did not win a majority of the popular vote. He was inaugurated President on 1 July 1974 for a four-year term. Although politically inexperienced, President Laugerud has taken tight hold of the reins of government and has proven to be a capable chief of state. For example, after Guatemala suffered a devastating earthquake on 4 February 1976, President Laugerud received much credit and praise for the extremely well organized disaster relief. The reconstruction effort continues and is progressing well.

(~~S/NOFORN~~) Since mid-1976, there has been a resurgence of terrorist activity by members of the extreme left who have threatened both military personnel and right-wing politicians. The increase is probably due to the insurgents' desire to put pressure on the government prior to the March 1978 national elections. In January 1977, the Guatemalan Army launched a counterinsurgency operation in Quiché province, where terrorist activities have been most prevalent. This drive has been directed against the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, the most powerful insurgent threat in Guatemala. Because of the remoteness of this area, the Army has been unable to exert any effect upon the guerrillas and is unlikely to achieve a decisive action against them.

(~~S/NOFORN~~) Also since mid-1976, the political situation in Guatemala has become more active. Hardline anti-terrorist attitudes have re-surfaced, as various parties have been preparing for the coming elections. In addition, Guatemala's traditionally hostile stance toward Belize has been receiving increased attention. President Laugerud has retained support for his moderate policies, but in time he may be forced to adopt a more rigid position and a more severe approach, especially in regard to internal security.

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1. Political-Military Situation--Continued

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Traditionally good relations with the United States soured somewhat in March 1977 when it became known that the U.S. Secretary of State's report to the U.S. Congress on human rights criticized Guatemala for past abuses. Considering this to be strictly an internal affairs issue, the Guatemalan Government responded by rejecting all U.S. military aid and all sales of military equipment that are conditional on the issue of human rights. Since the United States is Guatemala's principal trading partner and has provided considerable technical and economic assistance, relations probably will recover from their present low.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ A major item of Guatemalan national preoccupation is the future status of Belize (formerly British Honduras), a United Kingdom dependency. Guatemala claims sovereignty over Belize based on territorial exploration by Christopher Columbus and on Spanish colonial government jurisdiction. U.K. claims are based on the establishment of a colony in 1648 by shipwrecked British sailors. The British would like to grant independence to Belize but fear that, if they did, Guatemala would invade Belize and annex the territory. Relations with the United Kingdom have been sporadically tense for many years. Tension increased in 1975 when Guatemala augmented its forces in the Petén region bordering Belize; the U.K. countered by sending more troops to its dependency. Ministerial negotiations which began in April 1976 managed temporarily to ease tensions, and each side withdrew some troops. However, in October 1976 there was another round of troop reinforcements, and tensions remain high despite the fact that the talks are still occurring. It now appears that Guatemala would accept, in principle, the existence of an independent Belize, provided Guatemala were ceded some territory. The future of negotiations is uncertain, and the issue remains a politically explosive one in Guatemala.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Guatemala's armed forces are capable of defending the country against invasion by any of its Central American neighbors. They could conduct successful small-scale operations against El Salvador,

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1. Political-Military Situation--Continued

Honduras, or--provided British elements were not present--Belize. The Guatemalan Army appears to be making a concerted effort to replace much of its obsolete equipment with new arms, purchased mainly from Belgium, Israel, Taiwan, and Italy. This seems to be part of a program to prepare its forces for possible use against Belize. These arms are being obtained from non-U.S. sources because of Washington's past reluctance to supply Guatemala with the massive military assistance desired and the present U.S. policy of making aid dependent upon respect for human rights.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ The Guatemalan armed forces are weakened by a top-heavy senior officer corps, absence of a career program for NCO's, and still much obsolete equipment. Officially designated the Army of Guatemala, the armed forces consist almost exclusively of a ground element (popularly called the Guatemalan Army), plus a small Air Force and Navy. The President is titular Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, with control highly centralized under the Minister of National Defense, who normally is a senior Army officer. The military establishment theoretically is commanded by the Army Chief of Staff. In practice, however, the Minister of National Defense tends to communicate directly with the Chiefs of the Air Force and Navy. The armed forces are generally pro-West, particularly pro-United States, and have experienced no significant Communist penetration. Their public image, although poor in the past, has been generally improving because of increased professionalism and participation in civic action projects, particularly in disaster relief activities following the February 1976 earthquake.

2. (U) Key Officials:

President: Kjell Laugerud García (Brig Gen, Army, Ret)
Minister of Foreign Relations: Adolfo Molina Orantes
Minister of National Defense: Brig Gen Otto Guillermo Spiegeler Noriega (Army)
Army: Chief of Staff, Brig Gen David Cancinos Barrios

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2. (U) Key Officials--Continued

Navy: Commander, Captain José Antonio Contreras Roca (Acting) 1/
Air Force: Commander, Col Roberto José Francisco Salazar Asturias
National Police: Director General, Col Carlos Ignacio González

3. (C) Military Budget: $41,273,890 proposed for fiscal year ending 31 December 1977; 5.2% of the proposed central government budget and about 1.0% of estimated GNP. No service allocation is available. Dollar value converted from quetzales at the exchange rate of one quetzal equals US $1.00.

4. (U) Population and Military Manpower:
Population: 6,099,000 as of 1 July 1977.
Males (ages 15-49): 1,489,000; physically fit, 966,000; 63,000 reach military age (18) annually.
Ethnic Divisions: Indian, 41.4%; Ladino 2/, 58.6%.
Literacy: About 40%.

5. ~~(U)~~ Army:

Personnel Strength: 12,480 (980 officers, 1,545 NCO's, 6,915 privates, 2,470 specialists, and 570 students and cadets). Reserve - 15,000, semi-trained.
Major Units: 4 brigades (1 infantry battalion each), 10 separate battalions (5 infantry, 1 airborne infantry, 1 military police, 1 engineer, 1 training, 1 transportation), and 2 separate battalion-equivalent units (Presidential Guard, Mobile Military Police). In addition, there is a 400-man Tactical Group, stationed at La Aurora Air Base for airport security.

1/ Rear Adm Ricardo Peralta Méndez, Commander of the Navy, is on detached duty as head of the Guatemalan Reconstruction Committee, established to direct reconstruction from the damage of the February 1976 earthquake. It is not known whether he will ever reassume his Navy position.
2/ Westernized Indian, mestizo, and white.

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5. (C) Army--Continued

Major Equipment: 12 105-mm howitzers, 12 75-mm pack howitzers, 12 106.7-mm (4.2-inch) mortars, 5 M113 and 5 M113A1 armored personnel carriers, 10 RBY Mk. 1 armored personnel carriers (Israel), and 7 Cadillac Gage V-100 armored cars. In addition, items in the inventory of questionable combat effectiveness because of age are 15 M8 and 4 M8A1 armored cars which are of World War II vintage. Seven World War II M3 light tanks are considered so obsolete as to be useless.

6. (C) Navy:

Personnel Strength: 500 (40 general service officers, 10 Marine officers, 206 general service enlisted, and 244 enlisted Marines). No reserve.
Ships: 1/ 13 patrol boats (PB) (1 32-meter, 2 25.9-meter, 5 19.8-meter, 1 19.2-meter, 2 12.2-meter, 2 11-meter), 1 mechanized landing craft (LCM), 1 floating workshop (YR).
Total inventory: 15.
Units: The Navy is a small patrol force, with two naval bases (one on the Caribbean and one on the Pacific Coast) and one Marine Company of five platoons (four platoons on the Caribbean; one platoon on the Pacific Coast).

7. (C) Air Force: Personnel strength: 470 (65 officers, 405 enlisted), including 60 pilots. No reserve.
Units: 4 squadrons (1 fighter, 1 transport, 1 helicopter, and 1 maintenance).
Aircraft: 55: 13 jet (11 A-37B fighters, 2 T-33 trainers); 9 turboprop (transports - 8 Aravas, 1 C-12 Super King Air); 20 prop (10 transports - 1 DC-6B, 9 C-47s; 4 utility - 3 Cessna 206's, 1 Cessna 180; 6 trainers - Cessna 172); 13 heli (utility - 9 UH-1H, 3 Alouette III, 1 Lama).

8. (C) Paramilitary: None. The civil police consist of two distinct forces, both subordinate to the Ministry of Government (Interior). Personnel strength: National Police - 5,570; Treasury Police - 1,058.

1/ In addition, two 8.5-meter patrol boats are out of the water and apparently not salvageable.

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9. (U) Foreign Military Presence: There are Israelis in Guatemala training Guatemalan Air Force personnel on maintenance of the Arava aircraft. It is not known whether these advisers are civilian or military personnel.